



Visit Mississippi's Barrier Islands



Mississippi's barrier islands

Gulf Islands National Seashore protects wilderness islands, over 55 miles of sandy shoreline, salt marshes, a historic fortification and a myriad of wildlife. Although most of the Seashore is underwater this preserved area was set aside for you and your descendants. Your visit counts as support for this amazing national park area on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

How to get there

The islands are accessible by boat only. You can visit with your own boat, or by private charters. Call 228-875-9057, ext. 114 for a list of park-approved licensed boat operators.

Ferries run to West Ship Island from Gulfport from March through October. For more information about ferry service, call Ship Island Excursions at 228-864-1014.

Going on your own boat?

Travel on a 20-foot or longer craft. Inland water boats are not suitable for travel to the islands. Navigation charts 11372, 11373, and 11374 will help you identify shoals, obstructions, and shallow water.

Tell family or friends on the mainland where you are going (which island and a specific location), when you are going, who is with you, when you will be back, and who to contact if you don't come back in time. Make sure they know the name and registration number of your boat, and where you have parked your boat trailer and car.

Bring a marine VHF radio with channels 16, 22, and 23. Know how to use it. Bring someone else who can operate both the boat and the radio. Be prepared to call a friend or commercial towing service. *Park rangers will not tow disabled vessels.*

Bring a wearable Type III life jacket for everyone aboard and have more than one type of signaling device. When signaling for help, wave something besides your hands.

The US Coast Guard provides information about boating rules and safety. Call 1-800-368-5647 or visit www.uscgboating.org.

Anchoring

The pier on Horn Island is closed to the public. Use the right anchoring equipment for your type of boat. Be sure your boat stays in deep water when the winds and tides change. Boats too close to shore may run aground or be damaged by breaking surf.

Emergencies

Know how to use your VHF marine radio. The Coast Guard monitors channel 16 for emergencies.

Cellular phones and citizen band (CB) radios do not carry far over water, but if a shore station answers, tell them to call any of the following:

- 911
- National Park Service: 850-916-3007
- US Coast Guard, Gulfport: 228-868-3743
- US Coast Guard, Pascagoula: 228-761-2600

Be prepared to give your precise location and a distinct description of your vessel. Signal for help with a red flag, flare or continuous horn. If a plane flies over, stand high, stretch out and slowly raise and lower your arms.

Ranger stations on Horn and West Ship Islands operate year round.

Wilderness areas

Horn and Petit Bois are federally designated wilderness islands. Their natural features remain unaltered by people and qualify for the highest levels of protection. This special status does not make the islands invulnerable to damage.

Thousands of visitors a year, more powerful than nature if they are careless, could threaten the islands' wild character. You can help preserve the wilderness by visiting on the islands' terms.